



NOVEMBER 2002

# ETHICS BEAT

A publication by the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust

[www.miamidade.gov](http://www.miamidade.gov)

"ETHICS IS GOOD BUSINESS"

\*Agency est. 1997

Welcome to the second edition of ETHICS BEAT, our bi-annual newsletter. This newsletter provides community news, information about our activities and programs and the efforts of those promoting ethics, accountability and integrity in government. Should you have information of an ethical nature or other interesting news from your community or organization, we'd like to know. Fax it to us, at (305) 579-0273, Attn: Ethics Beat.

## ETHICS COMMISSIONERS

Kerry E. Rosenthal, Esq., Chairman  
Judge Robert H. Newman, Vice Chairman  
Dawn Addy  
Gail Dotson  
Elizabeth M. Iglesias

NEW  NUMBER  
(305) 579-9093

## Executive Director's Corner

It seems appropriate for me to devote this edition's column to our community outreach and educational activities. In August, we held a breakfast workshop entitled "Running for Office: What Every Candidate Ought to Know" and attracted an excellent cross-section of candidates, government officials and other community leaders. The program included speakers from the Miami-Dade League of Cities, the Department of Elections and the Office of the State Attorney. In late September, our office co-sponsored a one-day conference with Florida Atlantic University on accountability in public procurement in Miami-Dade County, with over one hundred people in attendance. Ethics Commissioner Robert Newman, Christina Prkic and Robert Thompson attended the 2002 COGEL Conference in Ottawa and indicated it was the best COGEL Conference to date. We are in the midst of scheduling the Second Annual Environment Ethics Conference with the University of Miami Ethics Program as co-hosts; target date is April 2003. Dr. Valerie Patterson, Florida International University, and I were selected to conduct a full day seminar on ethical leadership to local elected officials for the Leadership Training Institute at the 2002 Conference of Cities Conference in December in Salt Lake City. Finally, we are accepting nominations for the Third Annual Arête Awards, due at the end of this month. We have a new partner in this endeavor, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, and a new category, Business of the Year. Winners will be honored in early 2003.

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Robert Meyers, Executive Director

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## *"Who We Are and What We Do"*



**Who We Are** - In 1996, the citizens of Dade County amended the Home Rule Charter, supporting the creation of an ethics commission. Subsequently, the Board of County Commissioners, through an Ordinance, established the Ethics Commission, an independent agency with advisory and quasi-judicial powers. The Commission is composed of five members and each member serves staggered terms of four years each.

**What We Do - Our mission is threefold.**

**Enforcement:** Authorized to investigate complaints related to the following County or Municipal ordinances and has subpoena powers. The Ethics Commission has jurisdiction extending to the municipalities of Miami-Dade County provided the subject is covered by one of the ordinances under the Commission's authority.

**Advice Giving:** Renders Advisory Opinions – Any person within the Ethics Commission's jurisdiction, when in doubt about the proper interpretation or application of the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance as to himself or herself, or whenever any person who renders services to the County is in doubt as to the applicability of the ordinance, he or she may submit a request for opinion to the Ethics Commission.

**Community Ethics Education and**

**Outreach** – Our program accesses Miami-Dade's diverse community by participating in and coordinating an array of activities including local public television programs, ethics leadership programs and training workshops; meetings with non-profit religious and civic advocacy groups, hosting annual town hall meetings and a variety of panel discussions, local and national conferences and forums.

### ***NEW HOTLINE NUMBER***



If you have reason to believe that a public official or employee, may have violated one or more of the ordinances under the purview of the Ethics Commission, you can report it to the Ethics Commission via the Ethics Hotline. To report unethical conduct & abuses in local government, please call the Ethics **HOTLINE** at **(305) 579-9093**. For more information visit our website at [www.miamidade.gov](http://www.miamidade.gov).

### ***UPCOMING EVENTS***

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Arête Awards - Nominations Being Accepted for Third Annual ARETE Award**

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust, in partnership with the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce is seeking nominations for the 3rd Annual ARETE Award. The categories include: Volunteer Advocate of the Year, Program of the Year, Non-Profit or Community Organization of the Year, and Business of the Year. The deadline for submissions is November 25, 2002. The Ethics Commission and the Chamber will present the awards in early 2003. For more information visit our website at [www.miamidade.gov/ethics](http://www.miamidade.gov/ethics) or contact Robert Thompson at (305) 579-2594.

**Second Annual Environmental Ethics Conference** - We are in the midst of scheduling this event with the University of Miami Ethics Program as co-hosts; target date is April 2003. Details to follow.

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**Featured Advisory Opinion - Gifts.** At the July meeting of the Ethics Commission, members of the Commission reviewed a request for opinion concerning gifts, more specifically, a City's acceptance of monetary donations from a citizen for specific city projects and activities. Section 2-11.1 (e) "Gifts" of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance defines the term "gift" and sets forth the exceptions to the definition and other prohibitions. Section 2-11.1 (e)(2)(f) provides that, "The provisions...shall not apply to gifts solicited by Commissioners on behalf of the County in performance of their official duties for use solely by the County in conducting its official business." Moreover, should the donations be offered and accepted by the Commission without adequate consideration for something other than official city business, the City Commission must disclose those donations as gifts on the quarterly disclosure form, pursuant to Section 2-11.1(e)(4).

**The Ethics Commission** determined that under the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance there is no legal conflict that prohibits the City Commission from accepting monetary donations for specific city projects or official city business, or for private citizens from offering said donations absent any finding of an actual quid pro quo.

### ***WORKSHOPS HELD YEAR 2002***

#### **Accountability in Public Procurement Conference**

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust and Florida Atlantic University co-sponsored the Accountability in Public Procurement Conference on Friday, September 27, 2002 from 8:00 am - 4:30 pm at the North Miami Beach Performing Arts Center, 17011 Northeast 19th Avenue. The event brought together a diverse group of scholars, ethics experts, and private and public procurement practitioners to examine and debate substantive topics and procedural challenges facing the public procurement arena. Panelists and audience members discussed topics such as e-procurement and accountability strategies, inter-governmental collaborative opportunities and equity and best practices in public procurement. Visit our website to view proceedings from the conference.

-----Workshops (continued)-----

**Running for Office  
"What Every Candidate  
Ought to Know"**

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust held a two-hour workshop on August 1, 2002 entitled "Running for Office: What Every Candidate Ought to Know", which enabled declared candidates and others contemplating running for office the chance to gain more insight about the legal and ethical obligations imposed upon those who decide to seek elective office. Speakers presented information on topics such as financing campaigns, reporting and disclosure requirements, collecting and expending campaign funds and ethical campaigning. Panelists for this event were Howard Lenard, Esq., General Counsel for the Miami-Dade League of Cities and Gisela Salas, Assistant Supervisor of Elections, Miami-Dade County, Robert Meyers, Executive Director, Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust and Joe Centorino, Chief, Public Corruption, Office of the State Attorney. The event was held at the Miami Shores Community Center, 9617 Park Drive

(96<sup>th</sup> Street and Northeast 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue).

**The 1st Annual South  
Florida Environmental  
Ethics Conference**

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust and the University of Miami Ethics Programs hosted the First Annual South Florida Environmental Ethics Conference at the Kovens Center at FIU, Biscayne Bay Campus, 3000 Northeast 151<sup>st</sup> Street. Panelists discussed topics such as Corporate responsibility, Land use development, Environmental Justice and Everglades Restoration. Keynote lunch address was provided by Dean Emerita and Professor of Law, Mary Doyle, "Greed and Redemption: How Law, Policy and Ethics Will Save the Day".

**Ethics Summit**

An ethics summit meeting was held Friday, November 15 at the school board's headquarters, which the Executive Director chaired. Attendees included the state attorney's office, school board members and senior staff, FIU, St. Thomas University and University of Miami faculty and the county's Independent Review Panel. Meyers

said, "that significant resources are being expended to fight corruption and it is important to let the public know the fight is continuing." The group was reviewing the community's progress in the fight for ethical and efficient government and business practices and how to proceed in the future.

**Request a Speaker**

Our staff is available to make presentations or to conduct ethics training programs for your group. Please call **(305) 350-0630** to schedule a presentation or training.

**Did you know?** The term "advisory personnel" according to the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics ordinance applies to members of those County advisory boards and agencies whose sole or primary responsibility is to recommend legislation or give advice to the Board of County Commissioners. When in doubt, request an advisory opinion.

**Ethics Commission**

**Meetings: Open to the Public.** Visit us every second Tuesday of the month at 10:00 am. Call for details.